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### ARBEITSVORHABEN

## The House of Government: The Russian Revolution in One Building

Across the Moscow River from the Kremlin and the recently resurrected Cathedral of Christ the Savior stands a huge gray building known as the House of Government or the House on the Embankment. Built during the first Five-Year Plan as a model of the "Communist organization of daily life" and a shelter for top government officials, it takes up about three hundred acres on a marshy island and comprises 505 apartments clustered around 25 entryways and three connecting courtyards.

When the "House of the Central Executive Committee" opened its doors in 1930, it was itself an island - a city of the future separated from the city of Moscow by heavy metal gates and connected to it by luxury government cars shuttling over the Old Stone Bridge (which had been relocated for the purpose). It was a self-contained and unevenly collectivized private realm of public officials, complete with a post office, telegraph, tailor shop, cafeteria, bank, library, daycare center, kindergarten, laundromat, theater, movie theater, solarium, gym (with tennis courts and chess tables), grocery store, department store, shooting gallery, and beauty salon.

Sharing (or not sharing) these facilities, raising their families, employing German governesses, and constantly moving from apartment to apartment to keep up with promotions and demotions were high-ranking People's Commissars, Army commanders, proletarian poets, foreign communists, and assorted luminaries, including the professor who embalmed Lenin's body and the composer who wrote the Soviet national anthem. This microcosm's demiurge, the architect Boris Iofan, lived in a large penthouse apartment overlooking the never-completed construction of his next, and the world's ultimate, public building: the Palace of Soviets.

Then, in 1937-38, about 400 of them were arrested, accused of treason, and either shot or sent to the Gulag. Their families were exiled or relocated to communal apartments; their "living space" was taken over by polar aviators and record-breaking Stakhanovites (including A. G. Stakhanov himself).

I would like to write a history of the House of Government: as an examination of the physical structure itself, a collective biography (historical ethnography) of the people inside, a metaphor for the life and death of the first generation of Soviet rulers, and, ultimately, a history of the demise of the Russian Revolution.

### Recommended Reading

Slezkine, Yuri. *The Jewish Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

- . *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

- . "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism." *Slavic Review* 53, 2 (Summer 1994): 414-452.

## Was war der Bolschewismus?

Ich schreibe eine Geschichte des sogenannten "Hauses der Regierung" (auch bekannt als "Haus an der Uferstraße") in Moskau: des größten Wohnhauses der Welt, in dem die meisten und ranghöchsten Funktionäre der Sowjetunion und die "alten bolschewistischen" Revolutionäre Tür an Tür lebten, bevor sie sich während des Großen Terrors in den späten 1930er Jahren gewissermaßen gegenseitig festnahmen.

Einer der markantesten Begriffe in ihren privaten Briefen, Tagebüchern, Gedichten und Memoiren war der des Glaubens - des Glaubens daran, dass sich der Kommunismus innerhalb einer Generation etablieren würde.

In meinem Vortrag untersuche ich die Verbindungen zwischen dem Großen Terror, der Beschaffenheit des bolschewistischen Glaubens und den Gründen für den Untergang dieses Glaubens - innerhalb einer Generation.

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### PUBLIKATIONEN AUS DER FELLOWBIBLIOTHEK

Slezkine, Yuri (Princeton, 2017)

The house of government : a saga of the Russian Revolution

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=888040075>

Slezkine, Yuri (Princeton, 2006)

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Slezkine, Yuri (1996)

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